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ABSTRACT

Three issues concerning educational policy making are examined in this paper: (1) Who has the power to affect major policies in Canadian postsecondary education? (2) How does a shift in power affect educational policy making? and (3) How can institutional management best respond to this power? After presenting a rationale for its focus on power, the paper lists nine groups which influence policy making and comments upon issues associated with their degree of influence over policy making. These nine groups are, in order of influence, the provincial government, the institutional boards of governors, college presidents, college faculty, the federal government, faculty unions, college students, alumni associations, and local governments. After the assertion is made that the concentration of power in the hands of the provincial government makes any resultant policy less applicable to local needs, nine suggestions are provided as ways that institutional management can extend its power to influence policy making. These suggestions include the following: develop a strong identification with the next higher power source, i.e., the board of governors; strengthen the power base by forming peer groups such as a council of presidents; find out about the value systems and characteristics of those who have power; and move to a participative administrative mode. The paper concludes with comments on the inevitability and positive aspects of conflict in matters of power. (AYC)

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WHO HAS THE POWER?

Dr. W. G. Forbes
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Speech presented at the Transatlantic Institute
(Oxford, England, July, 1981)

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GOOD Evening, Ladies and Gentlemen.

The particular approach to the interplay between policy and institutional management that it is my pleasure to discuss with you, falls from what I believe is Canada's last dirty word - POWER. I find, in Canada, that it is easier to talk about money - and much easier to talk about sex - than it is to talk about power. People who have it, deny it and people who want it do not appear to hunger for it; and people who engage in its machinations do so secretly. Yet, because it turns out to be a critical element in effective institutional management, power - I would suggest - just must come out from under cover.

What I am saying, then, is that any major policy issue in Canadian post secondary education, is not a separate set of policies, but rather the more fundamental question of who has the power to make policy. To tackle this matter what we then need to do is to look at three items:

1. Who has the power to effect major policy in post secondary education institutions; what are the issues associated with having this power; who is getting more or less power and why.
2. How does the shift in power and acquisition of power effect educational policy making.
3. How does institutional management respond best to this power and power changes which are affecting post secondary education policies.

Now. before continuing these three issues I would like to take just a moment to set the stage for my observations. First off, there is the question of why do I want to talk of power. The first reason follows from some observations at the College level in Alberta. No single question appears more often in discussions with staff members at my college or with the Board of Governors. The Board talks about its erosion of power in the face of other agencies; the Faculty Association seeks to establish

policies to give them more power and to select staff and recommend terminations; and the support staff wish the power to define the policies governing their own job descriptions and salary classifications. At the Provincial level in Alberta, a Delphi study, aimed at determining the factors that would most significantly affect post secondary education in the coming decade - as determined by officials in Government, Universities and Colleges, shows that power and policies governing it are probably going to be the major issue. At the national level in Canada, the matter of power directly flows from the current discussions which are even spilling into your House of Commons. Our Prime Minister has suggested changes which would flow from the revised British North American Act which would see a national body established to determine national policies related to the direction and purpose of post secondary education. In all, then, I think that you can see through the College level through to the National level, the question of who has the power is of prime importance to policy making in the time of the life of Canadian Post Secondary Education.

Another observation that can perhaps give context as to why I perceive the matter of power to be an issue follows from an observation of business and industry when one looks to see if there are parallel power questions beginning to arise in that sector. By taking this look one can see whether the question of who has the power is peculiar to post secondary education, or whether it reflects a national social issue.

Well, taking that quick peak, leaves no doubt that the question of power also besets business and industry in Canada. The Federal Government is battling the 10 provinces over the question of control of industries. In industry itself there has never been a time in the last 25 years when there have been more attempts of one company to achieve power over another as exhibitted through mergers. Looking at individuals, the employees are demanding both policy and power roles through seats on Boards of Directors;

and at the worker level, individual businesses are establishing large departments that are specializing in human relations or organizational development. These groups take as their aim to get staff, at all levels, meaningfully involved in decision making and policy evolution processes. Industry on the other hand, wants its range of power of policy making increased and is moving in a direction of practice that has long been established in the United States and which is called lobbying. So I think then, on all sides one sees business, education and industry, strongly jockeying for a position whereby they can better control the policy making process.

Knowing that this is the context, then, I would like to get back to the question of power and policy making in Canada and look at the question of who has the power to affect major policy, what are the issues associated with this, and who is getting more or less of this power.

GROUP	COMMENTS
1. Provincial Government	In Canada, let there be no doubt that it is the Provincial Governments who have the power, both over the individual public college and the system of post secondary education. This manifests itself in the ability to determine the policy for all key functions of an institutions, such as mission statements, fee structures, fiscal policies and program initiatives. Thus, let me assure you that the Government is using this policy to ensure a bigger and greater share of it as time passes. Their arguments by which they justify this are simply that the Provincial Government is the best judge of the desires of the general populace and that the general populace is requiring a higher

level of accountability which only the Provincial Government can exert.

2. Boards of Governors

While I believe that Boards of Governors clearly place second and in theory have the power to approve all institutional policies that are consistent with those that are developed by the Provincial Government. In practice, I believe that Boards have considerably weakened their power by giving away to faculty a large amount of policy approval as it relates to non-fiscal matters. This has got to the point that even Boards of Governors themselves are seeing their power base being eroded and one often finds Chancellors and Presidents of Universities and Colleges in Canada going about the Country arguing that post secondary education will shortly become impotent or mediocre at best if Boards of Governors do not take back into their hands the reigns of power as it relates to the ability to determine overall policies of an institution.

3. Presidents

Presidents are third in the line of power and policy development in Canada. It is my observation that in the Provinces of Quebec, B.C., Ontario, and Alberta, that this power has been continually eroded over the past decade to the point where some Presidents feel that they are but a lackey of the mandarins of Federal and Provincial Governments. They also observe that they are loosing power because of Board/Faculty negotiations which designates

specific authorities and policy approvals to the faculty associations, while giving others to Presidents. In effect, however, this reduces the area of power and influence regarding policies which the President has control. I tend to think that this perceived decline of power regarding policy can be reversed and would like to talk about this for a few moments.

4. Faculty

I have had the opportunity of sitting in faculty association meetings in some six or seven Provinces, and in each I hear again and again the urging of faculty that they not simply be consulted in the governance process, but that they have the power to determine both policy and practice. While this does not sit well with either administration or the boards, I perceive that slowly faculty are making very significant gains in this regard. As a matter of fact, in the United States - for a given class of post secondary institutions - the United States Supreme Court has ruled that the faculty has so much power and so much involvement in policy making and decision making that they are not eligible to unionize.

5. Federal Government

I believe that the Federal Government sees themselves ranking this low in the power structure as it relates to policy making and this leaves them feeling distinctly uncomfortable in that they raise the tax dollars but distribute the resulting funds back to the Provinces without having much say in the policies governing how they are spent. This leads those at the

Federal Government level to conclude that they must put in place policies which will give them the control over the kind of education that a recipient of Federal money will undertake. In this way, they argue that they can be certain that the best development of the Nation's manpower resources will occur - and becuase they will represent the total population, they are in the best position to chart the policies which will govern that direction in post secondary education.

6. Unions

Province-wide faculty unions, rather than individual college faculty associations, are moving to seek more power in Canada - particularly in the Provinces of Quebec and Ontario. In particular they wish to be in a position to influence both Provincial and Canada-wide labor policies, such as those related to the right to strike, minimum system of grievance, etc. While they are slowly gaining more power across Canada, I anticipate that their role is going to be relatively small, as it relates to policy determination during the coming decade.

7. Students

The power experienced by students, particularly as it relates to the establishment of policy, is waning, both at the institutional and provincial level. They preceive this results from the fact that the leadership is so radical that they are out of touch with the typical student attending one of the public Colleges. However, I believe that Local Boards of Governors are sufficiently

sympathetic to the needs of students that if the latter wish to raise an issue on a given matter of policy that the Boards would go a long way in bending to ensure that student needs are met.

8. Alumni Association

Alumni Associations in Canada have very little power in that the Colleges hold students for about two years and thus a sufficiently strong enough tie to the institution does not develop for a good alumni association to result. Those that do associate with the College are not strongly interested in policy formation. However, over the coming decade I see the relative influence of power of alumni associations increasing significantly because Canada is moving in a direction whereby Colleges are being encouraged to raise funds. In many provinces for every dollar given the province matches the contribution thus making the impact of alumni donations very significant. I am almost certain that this new leverage being afforded to alumni will encourage them to seek a more active role in the policy making and governance of the institution.

9. Local Governments

Surprisingly, while most Colleges in Canada consider themselves to be community colleges, Local Governments have very little influence on their policies or policy making process. I do not expect this level of influence to change for Local Government usually perceive that their needs are being adequately met through community

representatives on the Board of Governors - at least as long as that Board is giving the policy direction that enables the College to be an institution of significance.

Turning briefly then to the second issue that I mentioned, that is the one of how does the question of who holds the power related to policies effect the quality of the policy that is being determined, I think that the concentration of power in the hands of Provincial Government makes any resultant policy less applicable to the meeting of local needs. Rather, such policy is aimed at meeting the needs of the Provincial Government. The problem with that is that provincial goals are geared only to the four year cycle of the period in which the particular government will be in power and before it must once again go to the poles. Accordingly, Government policies really have a relatively short life time thus leading to the potential for an environment for institutional management of policy making. Once again, then, I strongly believe that more power in the area of policy making must pass back to the hands of Boards of Governors for it is through them that one can really develop policy that has a concern for the balanced needs of the regions served by that particular college and the Board.

Well then, this brings us to the larger more important question of how does institutional management of the public college system in Canada best respond to the power issue and it's implications on policy formation. Here I would like to become very personal and suggest a number of ways that institutional management can extend their power to influence the control of policy.

1. Often these outside groups can more strongly influence government then can you as an individual.

2. Develop a strong identification with your next higher power source, i.e. Boards of Governors. In this way you can more readily influence the policies that they are able to make.
3. Strengthen your power base by forming groups amongst your peers, i.e. the Council of Presidents, Council of Board Chairmen, the Presidents' Secretariat. With them as a base, you can more effectively recommend policy to Government.
4. Develop a far better knowledge of value systems of those who have power, that you wish to access; and key your approach to them in the context of their particular values. For example, if I was at the age of nine to fourteen in the twenty's, my value systems would relate to such things as security, savings, conservation; whereas if I was between the ages of nine to fourteen in the 1940's I would be much more strongly concerned with mobility, the desire to win, etc.
5. If the holder of power that you are wishing to access is a group of people, research the personality of the group - in contrast to the personality of the individuals. Again, you can not gain their support if you can not relate to their values or to their system of approach to policy and power.
6. Gain/keep/pull back/control for final approval of dollars in your institution i.e. there is an old saying to those that in a company ask who has the power or who is the boss. The simple reply is that he who signs your purchase order or pay cheque is the boss. Controlling dollars is the one certain way to give you an assured influence over policy.
7. Recognize that there is ample research across North America that shows that power is associated first, and clearly, with institutional position. It is seldom a function of an individuals strength, cunning, will, or personality.

Thus some schools of management say that a good senior manager is one that gets things done but is not visible. I most emphatically would state that people have to see and know who holds a given office and what are the responsibilities

and power that that office brings with it if that person is going to influence policy.

8. Recognize very clearly that knowledge is potential power. You are dead if Government has a far better information base than you when you seek to gain approval for a given policy. Accordingly, build good computer drive, management information based systems, or word processing systems. It should also be mentioned that because knowledge is potential power, senior administration must have directly available to them a core of specialists which are not as readily available to others in the institution or the system.
9. Move to a participative government mode, and clearly define how it is being used. My preferred model is that of Victor Vroom, of Yale University, which was first published in 1973 and has been used successfully in both business, colleges, and universities. Through this you would gain a stronger position in policy development - particularly if you provide a good knowledge base.

Well, following from those personal observations on what is required from a Canadian perspective - from institutional management in the face of both a shifting and listing power base, I think that there are one or two general comments that should be made in concluding.

The first of these is that within a given post secondary institute, staff sees power as a closed loop. If faculty gain more power, then somebody else in the institution has to loose an equal amount of power. But this is not the case. Power in an institution is not a zero sum game. There are significant leaks in the total amount of power in a specific institution and ones staff have to know that and know that more and more power each year is flowing into the hands of government. We all have to work together within institutions to plug that leak if we are to preserve the measure of academic autonomy that enables us to best serve society.

And that leads to the final comment - which is that wherever power interfaces exist, it is inevitable that there will be some degree of conflict. However, conflict is not always bad and can be very positive if managed well. Thus the task of institutional amangement is to manage that conflict so as to produce positive results - a task that is only achieved if one first is able to develop a base of mutual trust and co-operation across all constituencies. And there, ladies and gentlemen, lies our greatest challenge as we move to achieve a better balance between those who have the power that makes the really significant impact on institutional policies!

Thank you.

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